

2021 CRAPPIE TOURNAMENT SUMMARY



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FISHERIES BUREAU



MISSISSIPPI WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, AND PARKS

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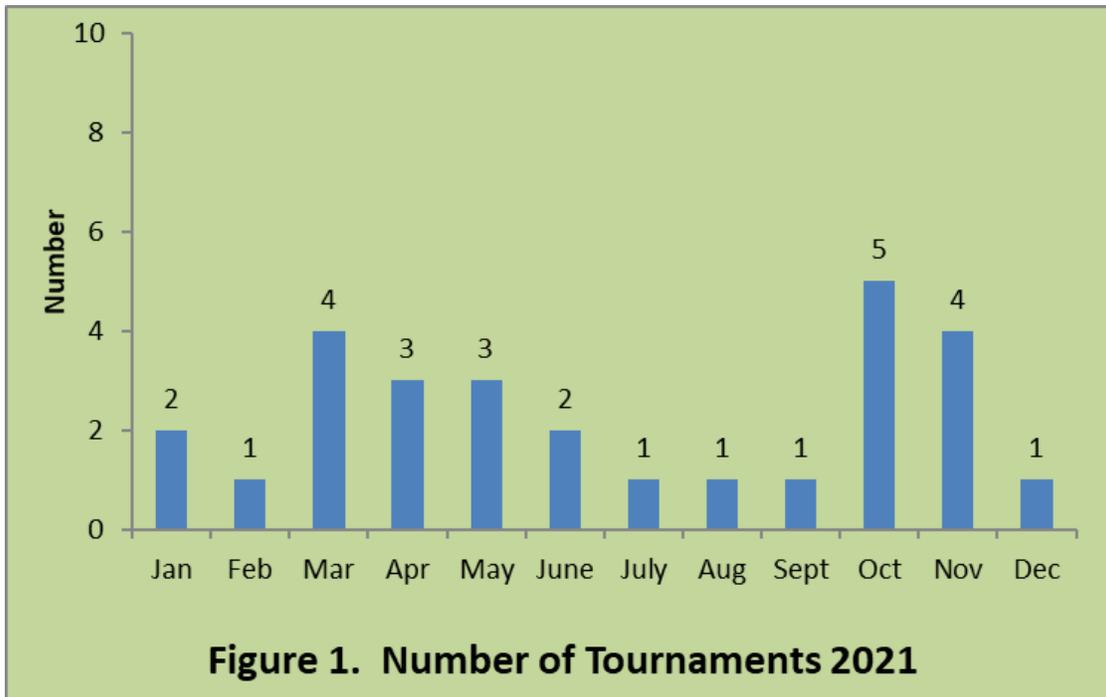
Your purchase of fishing equipment and motor boat fuels supports Sport Fish Restoration and boating access facilities.

In 2011, Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks (MDWFP) biologists began to archive information from crappie tournaments throughout the state. These data should prove helpful in managing one of Mississippi's most popular sport fish, as well as provide crappie anglers with valuable information for what to expect at different lakes for future tournaments.

Beginning in 2020, calculation of hours fished to catch a two-pound crappie (N2) was changed to more accurately reflect fishing quality. Since 2020, tournaments where no fish ≥ 2 pounds were caught were assigned an N2 of 1000 hours (based on the highest observed N2), and that figure was averaged with other N2 results for that lake.

A "tournament" was identified as such if daily results for two or three-day events (or pro and amateur divisions) were reported separately or not. Most tournaments were one day. Tournament daily bag limits were seven crappie per team. MDWFP obtained results from twenty-eight tournaments at ten different lakes from six sources (see acknowledgements). The most notable findings in 2021 were:

- A total of 2,121 crappie anglers fished 19,635.5 hours. Grenada, Sardis, and Enid had the most events. Grenada had eleven tournaments, 39% of all events. Aberdeen, Amory, Okatibbee, and Wolf each had one event. Anglers know there are good and bad fishing days. Because of that fact, results from lakes with fewer than three events may not accurately reflect the true quality of those fisheries.
- COVID19 had less impact on tournament schedules and results in 2021 than in 2020 when many events were canceled or postponed. No national tournaments were postponed and/or canceled. One unscheduled national tournament was held as a benefit. Club events were more likely to be postponed by weather, flooding, or other conflicts than COVID19. No fruit jar events were held in 2021, possibly due to expansion of local trails. Like a more normal year, most tournaments were in spring and fall with at least one event each month (Figure 1).



- More spring events in 2021 explained increases from 2020 in most weight-related statewide averages (Table 1). Spring crappie are normally pre-spawn and/or plumper than post-spawn and summer fish. The pounds caught per day rose slightly, but the number of crappie caught/day fell slightly from 2020 due to the greater average weight. The lower N2 in 2021 was likely due to changes in anglers' technology, as well as more spring events.
- The average statewide daily first place weight was 13.11 pounds (Table 1). It ranged from 17.19 pounds at Grenada to 9.36 pounds at Aberdeen (Figure 2).

| Table 1. Statewide Tournament Statistics, 2020 vs 2021 | | |
|--|---|-------|
| 2020 | - | 2021 |
| 2.99 | - | 2.89 |
| Number of crappie caught per angler-day | | |
| 3.98 | - | 4.09 |
| Pounds of crappie caught per angler day | | |
| 1.39 | - | 1.46 |
| Average weight of crappie caught (pounds) | | |
| 387 | - | 369 |
| Hours to catch a two-pound crappie | | |
| 2.45 | - | 2.40 |
| Average lunker or weight of biggest crappie (pounds) | | |
| 12.73 | - | 13.11 |
| Average daily 1 st place weight (pounds) | | |

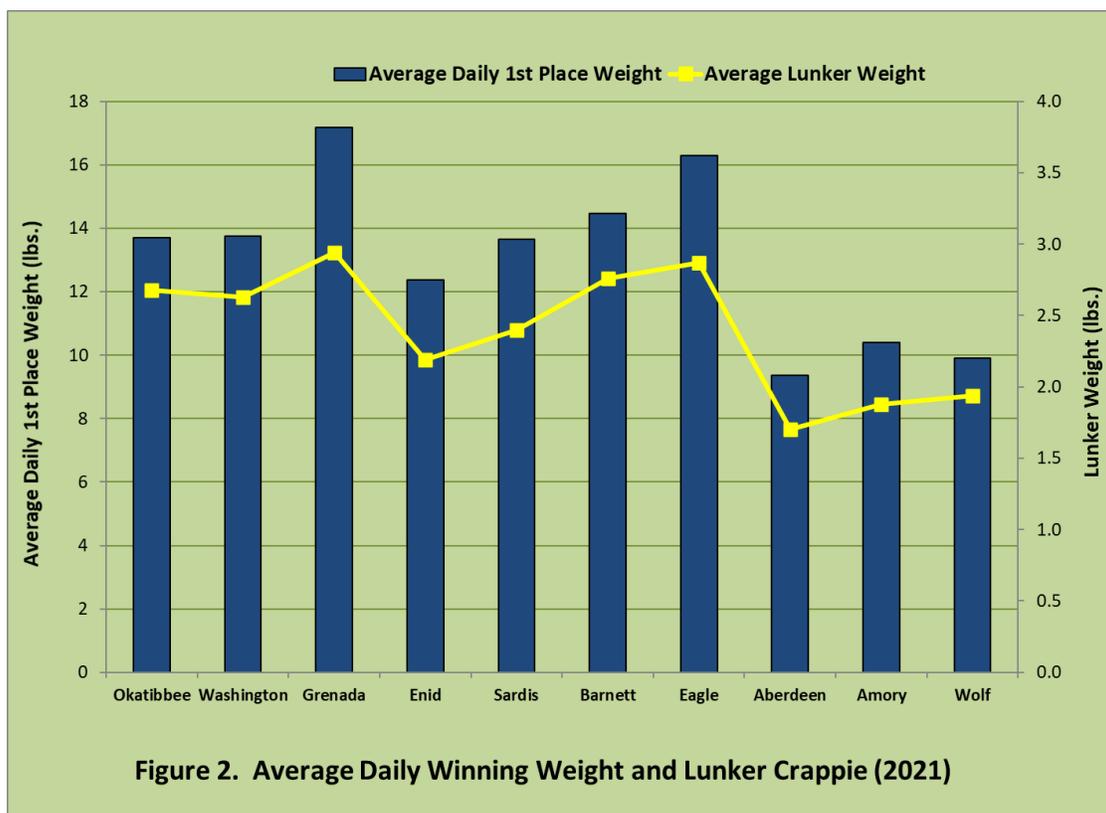


Figure 2. Average Daily Winning Weight and Lunker Crappie (2021)

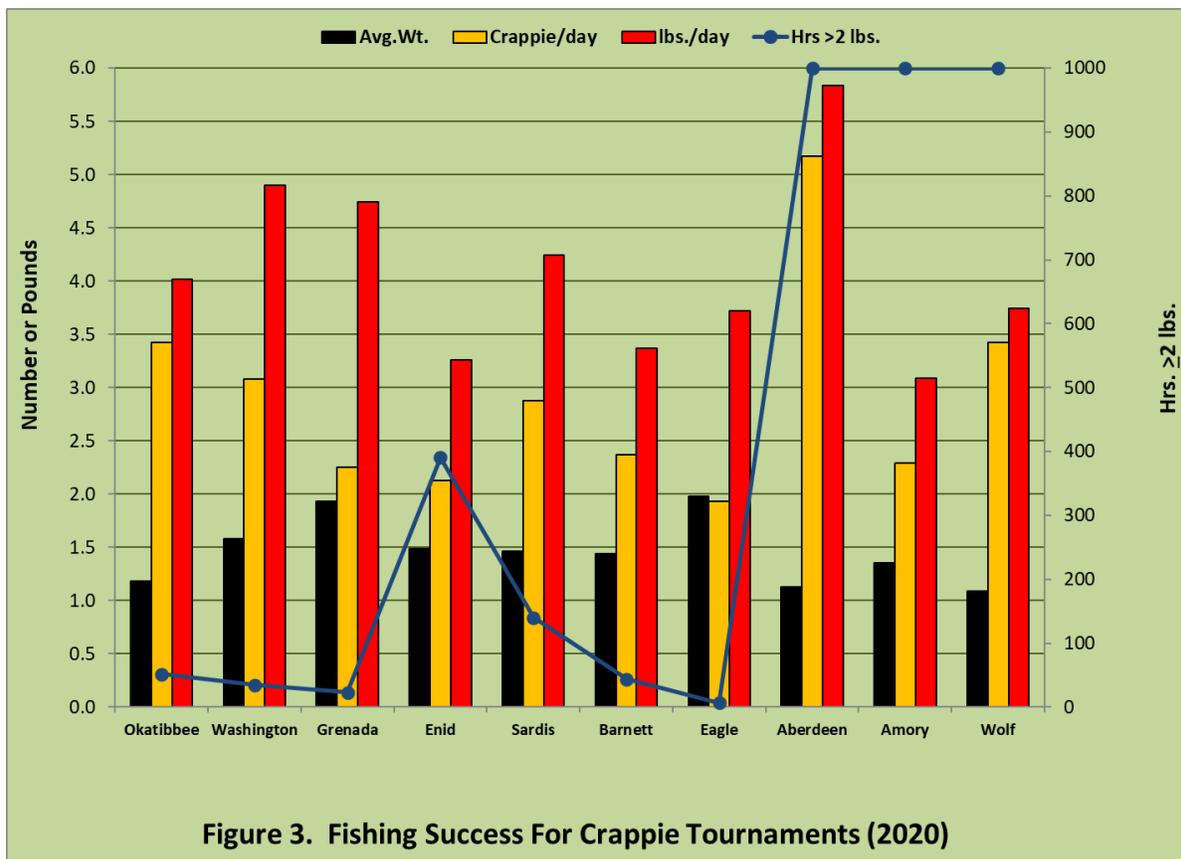
- The ten heaviest 7-crappie limits came from Grenada and Eagle (Table 2). The highest average daily first place weights (Figure 2) also came from those lakes. Grenada broke the three-pound average (3.06 pounds) with the biggest limit (Table 2). Eight of the top 10 limits came from Grenada.

| Lake | Date | Tournament | Daily 1 st Place Weight (lbs.) |
|---------|--------------|---------------------------|---|
| Grenada | March 12-13 | Crappie Masters National | 21.42 |
| Grenada | March 20 | Crappie Masters MS Trails | 20.45 |
| Grenada | March 6 | Magnolia Crappie Club | 19.23 |
| Grenada | March 19 | Crappie Masters MS Trails | 18.42 |
| Grenada | October 23 | American Crappie Trail | 18.10 |
| Grenada | September 18 | Magnolia Crappie Club | 16.73 |
| Grenada | May 14-15 | American Crappie Trail | 16.66 |
| Eagle | January 16 | Crappie Masters Trails | 16.58 |
| Eagle | January 23 | Magnolia Crappie Club | 15.97 |
| Grenada | October 9 | Crappie Masters Trails | 15.86 |

- The average big fish (lunker) ranged from 1.70 pounds at Aberdeen to 2.94 pounds at Grenada (Figure 2). The statewide average big fish was very similar to 2020 (Table 1). With changing technologies that allow anglers to target individual fish, these statistics will be watched carefully for future trends.
- The top 10 big fish weighed in came from only three lakes (Table 3). Crappie over three pounds were only caught at Grenada in March (Table 3). Teams may only weigh in only one "big fish" per daily limit, but several March limits at Grenada had more than one fish over three pounds.
- Average crappie weight ranged from 1.09 pounds at Wolf to 1.98 pounds at Eagle (Figure 3, Table 4). Number of crappie caught per angler per day was highest at Aberdeen (5.17), lowest at Eagle (1.93). Pounds caught per angler per day was highest at Aberdeen (5.84), and lowest at Amory (3.09).

Table 3. Top 10 Heaviest Big Fish Weights from 2021.

| <u>Lake</u> | <u>Date</u> | <u>Tournament</u> | <u>Big Fish Weight (lbs.)</u> |
|--------------|--------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Grenada | March 12-13 | Crappie Masters National | 3.78 |
| Grenada | March 6 | Magnolia Crappie Club | 3.57 |
| Grenada | March 19 | Crappie Masters MS Trails | 3.30 |
| Grenada | March 20 | Crappie Masters MS Trails | 3.24 |
| Grenada | May 14-15 | American Crappie Trail | 2.98 |
| Eagle | January 23 | Magnolia Crappie Club | 2.89 |
| Eagle | January 16 | Crappie Masters MS Trails | 2.84 |
| Grenada | September 18 | Magnolia Crappie Club | 2.84 |
| Ross Barnett | November 13 | Magnolia Crappie Club | 2.81 |
| Grenada | October 23 | American Crappie Trail | 2.76 |



- The number of hours required to catch a 2 pound or larger crappie (N2, Figure 3), was lowest at Eagle (7 hours) and highest at Aberdeen, Amory, and Wolf (1000 hours = none caught). Eagle had two January events; the highest three lakes each had one summer or fall event.
- N2 depends on many factors (season, weather, etc.) besides the fish population, but appears to be a good indicator of the presence of larger fish. Figure 3 and Table 4 show N2 and crappie/day were lowest at Eagle: few but big fish. At Aberdeen, N2 was tied for highest, average weight was next to last, but crappie/day and pounds/day were highest: very few big fish but abundant keepers. Enid had a fairly high N2, but also had the next to lowest crappie/day and pounds/day: few big fish and few keepers (versus few big fish and abundant keepers in 2020).
- Grenada finished first in overall quality indicator rankings (Table 4). Washington was second; Eagle was third. Most lakes changed rankings from

2020 because of few/no events. Okatibbee tied for eighth in 2020 but jumped to fourth in 2021 (one event each year). Arkabutla ranked second in 2020 (one event) but had no reported events in 2021. Amory and Aberdeen had no reported events in 2020 but had one each in 2021.

More reported events more evenly distributed among lakes would allow MDWFP to better compare and monitor Mississippi's crappie fisheries. Detecting trends in these fisheries has become increasingly important as angling technology improves and the potential impact on our resources grows. In response, some trails have discussed reduced tournament limits. One 2021 event (results not reported) had spotters in each boat and weighed and released fish on the water.

So, how good is crappie fishing in Mississippi? Compared to bass fisheries (relative to their respective world record weights), a state average 2.40-pound big fish (white crappie) would equal a 10.29-pound largemouth bass. A state average 13.11-pound, seven crappie tournament limit would equal a 40.16 pound, five bass tournament limit (an 8.03-pound average).

Since tournament anglers weigh in their seven largest crappie, tournament results differ from the catches of average crappie anglers. This report augments other MDWFP survey data (creel, electrofishing, netting, etc.) used to evaluate, monitor, and manage Mississippi's nationally acclaimed crappie fisheries. It also can be utilized by other biologists, average crappie anglers, and tournament organizations to improve crappie management, increase angling success, and maximize tournament success and participation.

Acknowledgements: Results were obtained from websites and/or Facebook pages of the American Crappie Trail, Crappie Masters, and Crappie USA national tournament organizations, the Magnolia Crappie Club, and the Crappie Masters Mississippi Trail - Eastern and Western divisions.

Tournament organizers that want to participate directly in next year's Crappie Tournament Summary can email their 2022 tournament results to either:

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Table 4. Final rankings of crappie tournament lakes in Mississippi based on 2021 results.

| Overall Rank | Hours to catch a crappie \geq 2 lbs. | Average daily 1 st place weight (lbs.) | Average Lunker (lbs.) | Average weight (lbs.) of fish | Average number of crappie per angler per day | Average lbs. per angler per day |
|---------------------|--|---|-----------------------|-------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| #1 Grenada (11)* | Eagle 7 | Grenada 17.19 | Grenada 2.94 | Eagle 1.98 | Aberdeen 5.17 | Aberdeen 5.84 |
| #2 Washington (2) | Grenada 23 | Eagle 16.28 | Eagle 2.87 | Grenada 1.93 | Okatibbee 3.42 | Washington 4.90 |
| #3 Eagle (2) | Washington 35 | Ross Barnett 14.47 | Ross Barnett 2.76 | Washington 1.58 | Wolf 3.42 | Grenada 4.74 |
| #4 Okatibbee (1) | Ross Barnett 43 | Washington 13.74 | Okatibbee 2.68 | Enid 1.49 | Washington 3.08 | Sardis 4.24 |
| #5 Ross Barnett (2) | Okatibbee 51 | Okatibbee 13.70 | Washington 2.63 | Sardis 1.46 | Sardis 2.88 | Okatibbee 4.02 |
| #6 Sardis (4) | Sardis 140 | Sardis 13.66 | Sardis 2.40 | Ross Barnett 1.44 | Ross Barnett 2.37 | Wolf 3.74 |
| #7 Aberdeen (1) | Enid 391 | Enid 12.36 | Enid 2.19 | Amory 1.35 | Amory 2.29 | Eagle 3.72 |
| #8 Enid (3) | Aberdeen 1000 | Amory 10.40 | Wolf 1.94 | Okatibbee 1.18 | Grenada 2.25 | Ross Barnett 3.37 |
| #8 Wolf (1) | Amory 1000 | Wolf 9.90 | Amory 1.88 | Aberdeen 1.13 | Enid 2.13 | Enid 3.26 |
| #9 Amory (1) | Wolf 1000 | Aberdeen 9.36 | Aberdeen 1.70 | Wolf 1.09 | Eagle 1.93 | Amory 3.09 |

*Number of tournaments in parentheses.

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